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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/666,088	09/19/2003	Don M. Hannegan	H055010.0048US0	8979

1200 7590 08/23/2005

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HOUSTON, TX 77002

EXAMINER
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NEUDER, WILLIAM P

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3672

DATE MAILED: 08/23/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/666,088

Applicant(s)

HANNEGAN, DON M.

Examiner

William P. Neuder

Art Unit

3672

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on \_\_\_\_.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

## Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 3/1/05, 1/19/05
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102*

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1,2,4-7,9,10,12,14-18 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hannegan et al 6,263,982.

Hannegan discloses a method of drilling in an ocean floor from a structure S floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular 14 and pressurized drilling fluid. A housing 20 is positioned above a portion of a riser R. The floating structure S is allowed to move independent of the housing 20. Communicating the pressurized drilling fluid from the structure S to an annulus of the riser R surrounding the tubular 14. Compensating for relative movement of the structure S and the housing 20. Attaching a flexible line 30 between the housing and the floating structure. Moving the pressurized drilling fluid through the conduit 30 to the housing and moving the pressurized drilling fluid in the housing into the annulus 1350. As to claim 2, the housing is lowered through a deck of the structure. As to claims 4,9,12 and 20, the pressurized drilling fluid is moved down the annulus and a portion of the fluid is returned up tubing 14. As to claim 5, the floating structure is fixed to a casing. A seal is within the housing. The seal contacts and moves with the tubular. As to claim 6, compensating for relative movement of the structure S and the housing during the moving step. As to claim 7, the

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drilling fluid is pressurized as the drilling fluid flows into the casing. As to claim 15, the floating structure S moves independent of the assembly when the tubular 14 is rotating. As to claim 16, a flexible conduit 30 is provided. As to claim 17, the conduit is connected to the housing at one end and to a pump at the other. As to claim 18, a portion of the housing extends above the ocean surface.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

Claims 3,8,11,13 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hannegan et al (applied above) in view of Hale et al 5076364.


Hannegan is considered to disclose all of the claimed features except for the formation of a mud cap. Hale et al teaches (column 12, lines 49-55) forming a mud cap in an offshore drilling system. It would have been considered obvious to form a mud

cap in the system of Hannegan as taught by Hale for the taught purpose of Hale of eliminating or decreasing the amount of hydrates formed.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William P. Neuder whose telephone number is 571-272-7032. The examiner can normally be reached on Tuesday through Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David J. Bagnell can be reached on 571-272-6999. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

  
William P Neuder  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit 3672

W.P.N.